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ADVISABILITY OF RESTRICTING US STATISTICS ON THE IMPORTATION
OF STRATEGIC MATERIALS

There are several ways in which this problem might be formulated. We might attempt to determine the possible benefits which a potential enemy could derive from the import information in question as against the cost to the United States of restricting it. If we were to assume that the value of the data to the tactical or strategic planning of the USSR was rather small, we might postulate that we should at least make it more difficult for the Soviets to obtain the information. We might then consider the cost to ourselves of this restriction in relation to the Soviet cost of circumvention. All of these considerations have a bearing on the problem, but it must be pointed out that they are extremely unamenable to precise determination. It is particularly difficult to comment on the uses which the USSR could make of specific information, or of the difference which the ready availability or lack of the information, as the case may be, would make in Soviet aggressive capabilities. In general, all economic intelligence concerning ~~another~~ country is closely interrelated, and the importance of a single fragment to the whole will vary.

Accepting the above limitations, it is believed that the focus of this problem ought to be on whether the particular type of information would provide the USSR with the capacity to arrive at intelligence evaluations which could not otherwise be obtained. In this regard the following points can be made:

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- (a) import data, as such, can be derived from numerous alternative sources
- (b) import data, even for the strategic commodities, have a relatively low utility value for most intelligence purposes
- (c) the type of intelligence indications which import data do reveal about the United States is, for the most part, readily available in more useful form in other domestically published materials.

The first point, that of alternative sources, need not concern us extensively. It should suffice to state that import statistics are either directly available or can be derived from the export accounts of other countries, from the activities of foreign producing and exporting firms, and to some extent from the movement of land and sea transport.

The Import statistics for most strategic raw materials have a limited value for intelligence. Such data do not in themselves reveal industrial use patterns, probable stockpiling rates, or specific strategic plans. This type of intelligence is more readily obtained from domestic production figures, from the allocations of critical materials, and from various industrial expansion programs. ~~On the other hand, Import statistics are~~ ^{sometimes} indicative of the general level of industrial activity, but information ~~on the GNP or on general levels of employment provide a similarly useful index.~~ ^{much more}

Information on trade is most useful in intelligence for the application of trade controls. However, under present cold war conditions, US primary sources of strategic imports are in areas not subject to direct Russian influence.

While the foregoing discussion would seem to mitigate against the adoption of widespread restriction of import statistics, a case can be made for selective restriction on individual commodities when the following conditions or facts obtain:

- (a) the commodity is one which enters directly and almost solely into the production of a strategically significant end product, in such a way as to indicate the total output ~~for~~ ^{of} that product.
- (b) information on the ~~production~~ ^{output} of the end product has been, or is about to be, restricted
- (c) the sources from which the import is obtained are amenable to security control.

An example of a commodity which meets the above criteria is uranium. There may be several other import items of this nature.

A word on the cost of restriction of import information should be included. By cost, we do not refer to the ~~tangible~~ costs related to an uninformed citizenry. Certainly these are important. We refer, rather, to costs related to intelligence objectives. An overall program for restricting import statistics in order to be meaningful would involve the co-operative suppression of trade data by the other countries of the non-Communist world. These measures, in turn, would cut off sources of information on the exports of strategic materials going to the Soviet Orbit and would tend to facilitate the USSR's circumvention of US trade control.